Südasien-Chronik - South Asia Chronicle 9/2019, S. 329-362 © Südasien-Seminar der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin ISBN: 978-3-86004-343-1

Student Politics and National Education in West Pakistan: A Review Essay

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KEYWORDS: STUDENT POLITICS, EDUCATION, DEVELOPMENTALISM, MUSLIM NATIONALISM; LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction: students and politics

The task to give an overview of literature on students in Pakistan[1] entails considering a dual perspective. In the following review essay, I will sketch the academic engagement within two thematic fields that converge in the body of the student: "National education" and "student politics". The study of students and their relationship to the state and nation in postcolonial Pakistan is first, about "national education", a developmentalist state-project, which has historically been characterised by a higher education bias. A grounded analysis of "national education" must take into account how national education in postcolonial Pakistan was rooted in the social and discursive history of colonial education. "Student politics" presents the second thematic field. As the latter section will show, the relationship of students to politics has for the most part been studied in terms of Pakistan's classical political history, with students being extensions of mainstream political mobilisations. Questions of

cultural history—how the nation is imagined in the body of the youth or how citizenship is subject to symbolic constructions of the ideal subject-citizen—are only tangentially touched upon. These questions would allow a deconstruction of the very term "student politics" and give insight into the postcolonial relationship of citizenship to "politics"—variously defined.

The idea that certain kinds of politics were an infringement of the sovereignty of the nation-state and needed to be curtailed through police action—a show of its monopoly over violence—became visible in moments of conflict between state and students, where the student took to the street or engaged in other "political" activities. At the same time, students were objects of a national pedagogy through which they were to be trained in the right kind of politics and a culture of service and discipline—to be the ideal citizen—for the good of the nation-state's future. A 'sad commentary' published in 1956 in a pamphlet by the National Students' Federation (NSF), a prominent leftist student organisation in West Pakistan, illustrates this tension.

> [I]t is a sad commentary on the attitude of the authorities towards the students that they have always acted in a hostile manner in relation to the students. […] [E]very Government in this country, irrespective of the "personalities" who stand at the helm […], have reacted with extreme intolerance and left no stone unturned to put down the student movement by ruthless force. It was so in 1949; it was so in 1952; it was so in 1953; in 1954; in 1958; in 1959; in 1960 and so on and it is still so today. […] The student community is the mirror that reflects the national mentality. […] That is why those who exhort the students to keep aloof from what goes on outside the walls of their institutions are demanding something wholly un-natural. […] Pursuit of their academic studies, combined with the regular sharpening of their learning through practical participation in the activities of the nation, is what make [sic] them confident and useful citizens in the years to come; otherwise they will turn out to be nothing more than golden swords with blunted edges. (National Student Federation Karachi, ca. 1967).

Founded in 1956, the NSF remained at the forefront of student politics well into the 1980s. The NSF traces its origins to the Democratic Students' Federation (DSF), that led a major student movement that spread from its origin in Karachi to the other big cities of the nascent state. The pamphlet, entitled "Twenty Years of Student Movement of Pakistan" was published in 1967 when the NSF and many other student

organisations across Pakistan joined the broad-based popular movement against the military dictatorship of Ayub Khan (1958-69). For more than one year, students took to the streets together with workers, peasants and political parties, all demanding an end to the authoritarian regime. It was on the wave of this popular uprising that Zulfikar Ali Bhutto sailed into power in the western wing of the country. The NSF's pamphlet sketches the history of the "progressive" student movements. It concludes with the paragraph cited above, which sums up the state's contradictory expectation: students were meant to grow into 'confident and useful citizens' while at the same time being forced to 'to keep aloof from what goes on outside the walls of their institutions'. The pamphlet's author expresses this tension in the metaphor of students being forged into 'golden swords with blunted edges.'

It is said that history repeats itself. On the 29 November 2019, the students of Pakistan came out in over forty cities across Pakistan to demonstrate for their constitutional rights as students and citizens of Pakistan. This current student movement is the first of its kind in over three decades. It identifies itself with the legacy of the student movement of the late 1960s that brought Ayub Khan's government to its knees. The moment of 1967-68 holds a symbolic place in the imagination of a progressive Pakistan and the narrative of the emerging student activism of contemporary Pakistan.

While a lot has changed in the educational landscape, in the demography and in the class character of young people entering higher education, the way in which the state deals with student activism today is strongly reminiscent of the last time that a broad-based student movement challenged the authoritarian structures in the 1960s.[2] The story of the students' challenges to Ayub's regime began in the early 1960s, when students of East and West Pakistan demonstrated against the newly passed University Ordinances. Implementing recommendations of the Report on National Education (1959), the ordinances severely limited the autonomy of universities and the independence of student unions. These laws were an infringement on the political rights of students to organise on campus and reflected the authoritarian crackdown on political rights in society at large. Student protests against these measures and generally, for the restoration of the democratic process in the 1960s were condemned by the government diversely as "hooligan-

ism", "sedition", "goondaism", and "indisciplined" behaviour unbefitting the youth of the nation (Bajwa 2019).

As I show in my thesis *The making of students as citizens: 'National Education' and 'Student Politics' in West Pakistan* (ibid.) the activism of students stood in tension to their ascribed role as the ideal citizen and their embodiment of the national self.[3] This tension did not only emerge with Pakistan's political independence but characterised the relationship of students to the nationalist elite throughout the history of twentieth century anti-colonialism, beginning with the introduction of the language of mass politics in the early twentieth century. The nationalist leader was concerned with the definition of the political culture of civil society. Student politics became a site where the statist authoritative languages of law and order, discipline, and civic duty found expression. These languages—informed by experiences of colonialism—were spoken by the leaders of British India's nationalist movements, who carried them into the postcolonial era. The case of Pakistan's current student movement begs the question, how much has changed and what has stayed the same?

The primary demands of the organisations involved in the Student Solidarity March last November is the revival of student unions and an end to the practice of forbidding students from engaging in "politics". A few years after the banning of student unions in 1984 by a Martial Law Order under Zia-Ul-Haq, the Supreme Court of Pakistan passed an interim order on July 1, 1992 in which it approved that

> at the time of admission to an educational institution, the student and his parents/ guardian shall give an undertaking that the student shall not "indulge in politics"; failing which he shall not be allowed admission. And if, after the admission, he violates such an undertaking [...] he shall be expelled from the institutions without any further notice. (cit. in PILDAT 2008)

In many educational institutions, students and their parents are required to sign an affidavit stating that the student will not partake in political activities. In 2008, in his inaugural address to parliament, PM Yusuf Raza Gilani announced that student unions would be restored. Since then, there has been a revival of an idiom of activism that speaks of the civil and political rights of students as adult enfranchised citizens. This idiom differs from the politics engaged in by those student organisations that

are wings of political parties and consequently reproduce mainstream political fault lines. Yet, the idea that student unions are undesirable because they cause students to engage in "politics" is firmly entrenched in public discourse. Various political talk shows and news formats have invited the spokespersons of the student organisations that partook in the Student Solidarity March. A clear media narrative emerges that equates the demand for student unions with the problem of violence on campus. On 1 December 2019, on the talk show *Jirga*, anchor Saleem Safi asks his guests, four student representatives[4] the following question: 'It is said that that the real job of students is to study, then why should they do politics? Then why do you want the restoration of student unions? The job of students is to study, is it not? It is not to do politics.' (Safi 2019)

The question the anchor poses here reflects the tension between the state's envisioning of a modern rational citizenry in its pedagogical project of "national education" and its (post)colonial reflex to delegitimise all forms of political dissent. The Student Solidarity March was demanding a revival of a democratic space for students to represent their interests. In a reaction reverberating past (colonial) state's reactions, students that led the march were labelled as "agitational", "anti-national" or smacked with sedition charges (Noor 2019).

This echoes the way "sedition" and "student indiscipline" were used in the colonial governmental narrative. The postcolonial state reproduced these labels. In the 1960s, for instance, one of the topics of discussion in the chambers of government was "student indiscipline". This issue concerned the Ministry of Education, but also the Interior Ministry, the Ministry of Broadcasting and Information and the Intelligence Bureau along with the provincial Criminal Investigation Departments. "Student indiscipline" was an issue of "law and order", of "communist influences", of the cultural "virus" of "westernisation", of the "selfish politician" out to exploit the youth. Myriad discourses converge in the issue of "student indiscipline" and "student politics", then and now (NDC 1960; Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Education 1966). Such discourses on "student politics" reflect the inherent tension within the project of postcolonial citizenship.

I have argued in my thesis that students were not only ascribed the symbolic status of "youth" but also presented themselves as the voice of the youth in their public articulations in speeches, debates and public-

cations. To repeat the metaphor from the NSF pamphlet, the students did not want to be 'golden swords with blunted edges'. In "representing" the youth of the nation, the students spoke and acted as self-aware citizens. They were, what I call, student-citizens (Bajwa 2019). If students in Pakistan's history have been citizens that could be 'agents and articulators of change' (Iqtidar 2011).[5] The question arises how and when they emerged as social actors that possessed the voice to make their discontent and visions heard. My analysis shows that university and college students in early postcolonial Pakistan acted as self-aware citizens and could engage with the postcolonial state in ways that the "ordinary Pakistani" could not. "Student politics" crafted a space that questioned inequalities in society but was simultaneously embedded within the same. To be a student implied being in a position of privilege.

I argue that the co-ordinates of this privilege can only be uncovered by paying due attention to its deep rootedness in the history of education, both in colonial India and postcolonial Pakistan. Thus, the study of students in Pakistani society does not always find the student and the state on opposing or antagonistic sides. Instead, it presents an entangled, mutually impacting, institutional and discursive history of students *and* the state. Thus, an engagement with the history of students must integrate not only "student politics" but "national education". "National education" is a manifestation of the historical making of class distinctions, social hierarchies and the postcolonial state. It was not only the result of structural continuations from the past but actively (re-)produced through state and student actors, not least in the space of "student politics".

'National education' in Pakistan's history

After Partition, "national education" emerged as a project of state-led development entangled with Muslim modernist visions for the nation. It had, however, been on the agenda and in the making since the mid-nineteenth century, as a field for projecting and shaping the citizen/subject. In my thesis, I trace the history of "national education" across the 1947 caesura up to the end of the 1960s. Thinking in terms of the post/colonial is crucial for understanding the making of the student as the "ideal citizen", a figure that was heavily informed by the class-laden nature of education, beginning from the late nineteenth century with traceable continuities in the postcolonial. The postcolonial developmental

state was historically produced through ideas of nation, progress and citizenship that were part and parcel of the political culture of the social class of Muslim Indians that became the power elite in postcolonial Pakistan. National education in its postcolonial manifestations continued to reproduce the exclusivity of citizenship and the paternalism of the state as "caring" for its population. The pre-1947 biographies of the modern nationalist elite influenced the maintenance of the higher education bias inherited from the colonial education system, which contributed to maintaining the realm of citizenship as an exclusive space accessible primarily to the "educated". Thus, in this review essay, I give an overview of the literature that concerns itself with higher education and its place in colonial education and anti-colonial nationalism.[6]

There is significant literature on the educational responses of Indian elites under colonial rule, especially for the nineteenth century, when the colonial state began establishing a "system" of higher education in India. After 1854, the colonial state tried to build an integrated system of education, ranging from primary (vernacular) to higher (English) education. In her book *Empire, civil society, and the beginnings of colonial education in India*, Jana Tschurenev has discussed this process for the Bombay presidency (Tschurenev 2019: 245-89). *Madrasah* education and its relationship to modernity under colonialism is one prominent field of inquiry (Zaman 1999; Robinson 2001; Metcalf [1982] 2016). These studies are part of a larger body of literature on the issue of reform and education, including projects in the national idiom, as they emerged in dialogue with or assertion against colonial institutions and discourses.

The special issue on *Knowledge, pedagogy and Muslims in colonial North-West India* (Powell 2011), too, contributed to this field. It includes multiple papers on Muslim elite pedagogical ideas on national uplift such as one on Muhammad Iqbal's (1877-1938) engagement in debates over Muslim education in colonial India (Sevea 2011). Such studies set themselves apart from a historiography of education in colonial India that is primarily concerned with the top-down approach of colonial educational policy and are based almost exclusively on the colonial government sources, such as Moir and Zastoupil's detailed analysis and commented source collection of the Orientalist-Anglicist Controversy (Zastoupil & Moir 1999) or Agrawal and Biswas' historical survey of educational documents from colonial times to present day India (Agrawal & Biswas 1994).

The studies of various educational experiments, institutions and movements in the context of emergent nationalism from the end of the nineteenth century are abundant (Powell 2011; Sevea 2011; Kumar 2013). There are in depth studies of the Gurukul Kangri (Fischer-Tiné 2001), the Muslim Anglo-Oriental (M.A.O.) College at Aligarh (Lelyveld 1996), the All-India Muslim Educational Conference (Hashmi 1989; Khan 2001), and the Wardha Scheme (Oesterheld 2007; Holzwarth 2016), to name a few examples from across the ideological spectrum of Indian nationalism during colonialism. One of the concerns of these studies of "national education" under colonialism is the internalisation of colonial discourse(s) of "progress"—the civilising mission (Mann & Fischer-Tiné 2004; Mann & Watt 2012)—that are entangled with social histories of the making of an Indian political elite.[7] David Lelyveld's social and cultural history of the "first generation" of Aligarh students that became the leaders of Muslim nationalism is the most comprehensive study of this kind for the Indian Muslim context.

In his book *Aligarh's first generation: Muslim solidarity in British India* (Lelyveld 1996) he examines the central place of the M.A.O. College at Aligarh as an educational institution in the 'hybridizing encounter' between coloniser and the colonised and how this encounter shaped nationalist politics as an elite project (Chakrabarty et al. 2007: 3). Lelyveld's work provides excellent empirical insight into how the project of "national education" was tied to the political visions and class interests of the *ashraf*, the Muslim gentry of north India. *Aligarh's first generation* tells a story of an anglicised elite that created a vision of the nation and its ideal citizen. The book examines how the institutions of colonial education and its inherent assumptions of "progress" were crucial to this history. Lelyveld's study highlights the elitist nature of Syed Ahmad Khan's (1817-98) visions of "national education". It thus supplements a group of studies (classics, and new) which are highly critical of the elitist nature of (Hindu) national education, and which discuss both colonial and national education in terms of their effects on social inequality (Bhattacharya 1998, 2002; Rao 2010; Kumar et al. 2013).[8]

Historians of independent India have placed their analysis of postcolonial education against the backdrop of colonial legacies. Studies on Pakistan, however, cannot boast the same breath of literature concerned with the role of education under colonialism in shaping the postcolonial trajectory of the education system. Most of the literature on

inequalities in the education system, its higher education bias, the split between public and private sector educational institutions, and the role of language in creating hierarchies are examined from a policy or development studies perspective. These often examine the evolution of state educational policy without seriously embedding it into a social or historical analysis, as for instance, K. Bengali's *History of educational policy making and planning in Pakistan* (Bengali 1999). Those who take social and political factors into consideration, do this from a developmental perspective that privileges statistical and sociological approaches (Hoodbhoy 1998, 2009). Only a handful of studies deal with the inequalities of the education system in Pakistan and how these reproduced relations of power in state and society across 1947.

One noteworthy mention is Tariq Rahman, who has written prolifically on the question of the entanglements of language, power and education in Pakistan and how these are rooted in a colonial past. The English language, as transmitted in the national education system, played a crucial role in the status of this class of modern nationalist elite (Rahman 1996). He points to the centrality of the "anglicised Muslim elite" in shaping the postcolonial priorities of educational policy towards maintaining citizenship as an exclusive realm.[9] His article "The education system in Pakistan with respect to inequality" (Rahman 2010) is one of the few examples that deals with the relationship between class, language and education. It appeared in an edited volume *Shaping the nation: an examination of education in Pakistan* by Stephan Lyon and Iain R. Edgar, which has an eclectic mix of essays including anthropological, sociological and historical studies, covering a range of aspects from the tension between "secular" and "religious" educational institutions to the privatesation of education (Lyon & Edgar 2010).

As in Indian nationalist historiography, Pakistan's official (national) histories have also identified the need to "decolonise" the education system. There are a number of authoritative publications from the 1970s and 1980s that frame their analysis of educational development in Pakistan through the lens of 'national reconstruction' (Quddus 1979; Zaman 1981). Before them came Ishtiaq Hussain Qureshi, who can be termed as the father of "national history" in Pakistan. In his book *Education in Pakistan: objectives and achievements,* first published in 1975, he laments the lack of 'fundamental thinking' on education in Pakistan (Qureshi 1975: Preface). The two publications he deems to be

exceptions are the first education minister Fazlur Rahman's collected speeches of the early years after 1947 compiled in *New education in the making in Pakistan* and the 1959 report of the *Commission on national education* (Sharif Commission) (Rahman 1953; Government of Pakistan 1959). Despite their relative merits in the face of the dearth of any academic writing on the question of national education, he sees both publications as a sign that in Pakistan 'education has been more the concern of bureaucrats and equally ill-informed politicians than of academicians.' (Qureshi 1975: Preface) The book is his attempt to rectify this through an academic engagement with the topic.

Ishtiaq Hussain Qureshi's (1903-81) analysis of education in Pakistan and its colonial "heritage" is one made strictly from within the framework of "national historiography", arguing for a recovery of the moral content of Islamic education, which he argues was lost under colonialism. The parallels between the Muslim modernists' emphasis on "nationalising" education and Gandhian expressions on the topic or the lesser known Arya Samaj educational experiment of the Gurukul Kangri (Fischer-Tiné 2001, 2003) are striking. While M. K. Gandhi (1869-1948) speaks of recovering the 'beautiful tree' of indigenous education, Qureshi makes a call for the revival of a truly national education, which can only be achieved with the integration of Islamic knowledge into the very edifices of the education system (cit. in Dharampal 2000: 6). It would be easy to dismiss his arguments as polemic and teleological, infused with discourses of the glorious past of Islam in the subcontinent and the lamentation of its decline. While the book certainly *is* guilty of these charges, it can also be read as a call for the intellectual decolonisation of Pakistan.

For Qureshi, education stands at the centre of this project of overcoming the legacies of colonialism and becoming a true nation. This study is a Muslim modernist critique of the colonial legacies in the education system of Pakistan in terms of its "moral" content and national needs but does not go into causes of the persistent higher education bias. The higher education bias is a remnant of colonial governance, which tried to build an education system from above, not from below.[10] This approach manifested institutionally the "downward filtration theory", propounded by the infamous Anglicist reformer T. B. Macauley, for the British mission of improving and developing India. It was reincarnated, with fillip from Cold War agendas, in the developmentalist dogmas of economic growth and promises of the "trickle-down effect" as epitomized in Rostow's theory of

modernisation.[11] If one is concerned with making sense of the nationalist perspective *on* education, and its inadvertent reiteration of colonial ideas and practices, and entanglements in Cold War ideologies, Qureshi's work, like that of the Fazlur Rahman and the Sharif Commission become valuable primary sources.

One important aspect within the theme of "national education", unfortunately heavily underrepresented in the literature on postcolonial Pakistan, is the question of how women's (higher) education emerged as a special category in terms of educational governance and development planning. A notable exception is Rubina Saigol, who has discursively analysed educational policy documents and curricula in postcolonial Pakistan in her book *Knowledge and identity: articulation of gender in educational discourse in Pakistan* (Saigol 1995). Moreover, much of the history of Muslim women's education in colonial India, remains unknown. Tim Allender's examination of how women's education featured in British India's colonial statistics, reports and plans has revealed Muslim women's marginalisation in state-funded education (Allender 2016). In (reform) Hindu contexts, the education of women was not only a highly contested issue; female education reformers often faced outright opposition (Karkekar 1986; Rao 2011).

Against this background, what were the debates and politics of women's education in the context of reformist Muslim thought and (nationalist) educational endeavours? One seminal book on the social history of education, reform and community in the nineteenth and early twentieth century that places Muslim women at the centre is Gail Minault's *Secluded scholars: women's education and Muslim social reform in colonial India* (Minault 1998). Further, Minault has written multiple essays over the course of thirty years on the relationship between reform, community, and gender in the Indo-Muslim colonial context. Compiled in the volume *Gender, language and learning: essays in Indo-Muslim cultural history* (Minault 2009) the essays engage with the history of how women and female spaces became the subjects where redefinitions as well as reassertion of norms of community and religious life were negotiated and expressed. She also has written about the reception by women of the Muslim modernist ideologies, articulated by male social reformers. In the space of print media and women's associational activity, she has shown how women's voices highlight the tensions with the project of Muslim social reform, in particular regarding female education.

One of the main arguments she makes is that Muslim social reform both perpetuated *sharif* values that regulated the female space but was also transformative in its effect of opening spaces through educational projects "outside" of the domestic (Alam 2011). Gulifshan Khan (2013), similarly, has examined the male politics of advocating for female education in the case of Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah (1874-1965). One article that gives an overview of nineteenth century educational discourse with respect to Muslim women is by Rubina Saigol. In the edited volume *Engendering the nation-state* (Saigol in Hussain et al. 1997: 155-86), she analyses the 'gendering of Muslim education' in nineteenth century colonial India (Saigol 1997: 164). Syed Ahmad Khan, Maulana Ashraf Thanvi (1863-1943), and Nazeer Ahmad's (1831-1914) ideas on education of Muslim women, she shows, were premised on a division between the public and the private, the "modern" and the "traditional".

As education transformed from a social reformist project of Muslim nationalism into a state-led technology of governance, how did this effect the place of women as citizens-in-making and objects of nation-building? The pedagogical project of the Muslim nation with the male citizen-in-making at its centre spilled over into the postcolonial phase. How then, were questions of nation, Islam and modernity negotiated in a language of development, in particular regarding female citizenship and labour? There existed of course female led educational ventures during the anticolonial movements, as Lambert-Hurley, for instance has shown in her study of the All-India Ladies Association and the part Muslim women played in it (Lambert-Hurley 2004). There certainly were female students—'daughters of reform' (Minault 1998: Ch. 6)—who attended university before and after 1947; and there were many women who envisioned female education and women's emancipation in the literary sphere (for Bengal: Amin 1995; Bagchi 2009; Akthar 2013). However, governmental conceptions of the nation, the ideal citizen, and the student were embodied primarily in the male youth. The young Pakistani woman, on the other hand, was instead to build the nation through her roles of mother, wife, and home maker (Sevea 2011). This recalls the ways in which domesticity become the object of governmentality and of efforts of nation-building through the academic institutionalisation of "home science" for girls in late colonial India (Hancock 2001).

The symbolic ascription of the role of the women as being the keeper and nurturer of the moral inner realm of the nation (Chatterjee 1989)

stands in contrast to the professionalisation of female labour, especially care work, that had slowly begun to take place in the late nineteenth century colonial India (Allender 2016; Tschurenev 2018). This tension was an identifiable concern in policy planning of education that had the "material progress" of the national economy in mind while at the same time catering to its "moral progress" through a gendered imagination of the nation. How did national education target the female population of Pakistan and what can a nuanced historical analysis of this tell us about the inner tensions of the project, its transformations in response to the professionalisation of women's work as well as the needs of the national economy? State-led developmentalism as a discourse of progress connected the state activities of planning and "caring for the population" to a symbolic field of national-becoming. In the 1950s and 1960s in Pakistan the nation-state was characterised by a developmental paradigm of Cold War modernisation that encountered Islamic modernist discourse on national identity and moral progress. Here we see in the postcolonial developmentalist setting a Muslim modernist iteration of the colonial civilising discourse of "moral and material progress" (Mann 2004).

These dynamics are examined at the level of discourse by Rubina Saigol in her book *Knowledge and identity: articulation of gender in educational discourse in Pakistan* (Saigol 1995). It stands alone in its scope and detail, in its examination of female education in terms of Pakistani nation-statist discourse. The default "student" that was the object of "national education" being the male one, female students were generally addressed specifically through the scattered educational efforts dedicated to fields deemed suitable for female education. In the early two decades of independent Pakistan's national education policy these were particularly subjects such as home economics, nursing, and school teaching. In her historical-comparative analysis of the educational and curricular discourse during the Ayub Khan (1958-69), Z. A. Bhutto (1973-77) and Zia-ul-Haq (1977-88) eras Rubina Saigol has shown how education for women was largely defined by gendered ideas of duties, rather than rights (Khan & Saigol 1994; Saigol 1995). This approach continued to inform government planning of education well into the 1980s, given fillip under Zia-ul-Haq's programme of Islamisation.

"Student politics" in (West) Pakistan

The second section of this review essay is concerned with the making of the nation and citizenship through the lens of "student politics"[12] The mention of student politics brings to mind images of street protests, dynamism, fiery speeches, banners, pamphlets and flags, strikes, and students calling for change, expressing solidarity or voicing their discontent with the state-of-affairs, be they local, national or even international. As in other parts of the world, these images point to the radical potential of student politics; they are also reflected in the historiographical treatment accorded to the role of student organisations as a force for change in Pakistan. Pakistan's history is infused with references to students as the difference-makers in the trajectories of political movements on the national stage. From their pivotal role in the mobilisation of a mass movement for "Pakistan" in the late colonial period, to their position at the forefront of the popular upheaval in East and West Pakistan against the military dictatorship of Ayub Khan in the late 1960s, students are cited as important political players in Pakistan's history. While the significance of student politics is not denied, their place in Pakistan's historiography has mostly been limited to the footnotes of history books. The most recent protests in November 2019 in Pakistan remind us of the need for a more nuanced reading of students as social actors in history.

Political histories of Pakistan mostly treat students as complementing the strength of political movements. Seminal historical studies of Muslim nationalism in colonial India weave in the role of young volunteers and students in the political articulations of Muslim nationalism (Minault 1982; Jalal 2001). Two works that go into significantly more detail are, first, Ian Talbot's study of the Muslim National Guards in a chapter of his book *Freedom's Cry* and second, *Colonial Lahore*, co-authored with Tahir Kamran, that has a chapter on revolutionary students and youth volunteers (Talbot 1996; Talbot & Kamran 2016). They present the scattered historiography on Muslim students as social actors rather than mere addendums to nationalist political movements in the colonial period. One further example is Markus Daechsel's historical study of the nature of politics in the Urdu middle-class milieu around the middle of the twentieth century, in which students are dealt with as social actors that engaged in what Daechsel terms the "politics of self-expression" (Daechsel 2006) Amber Abbas' article "The solidarity agenda: Aligarh students and the

demand for Pakistan" (Abbas 2014) looks at student political discourse at the Aligarh University from the early twentieth century. She argues for a complication of the linear narrative imposed on the development of Muslim nationalist thought and politics at Aligarh. The demand for statehood was not the defining character of student visions, but rather a "solidarity agenda" that saw "Muslim uplift" as its central objective.

The only monograph that exclusively centres around the Muslim student in the colonial period is by Sarfaraz H. Mirza on the political history of the Punjab Muslim Students' Federation (Mirza 1991). Written as part of the officially sanctioned history of Pakistan, it is an empirically detailed political history of the organisation within the framework of Muslim nationalism. Embedding itself in the nationalist narrative of the "two nation theory", the book draws heavily on the well-researched cum autobiographical work of Mukhtar Zaman, a former student leader of the All-India Muslim Students Federation (Zaman 1978). Student participation in the Pakistan movement is a topic that is unsurprisingly relatively well-documented by the nationalist historians of Pakistan in comparison to other themes that fall outside the interest of nationalist historiography. Unlike other topics, the sources related to the organisations and actors that were linked to the Pakistan movement are comparatively well-preserved in the National Archives of Pakistan, and in the Freedom Movement Archive, in Islamabad. The two published collections of Muslim Students' Federation sources are Sarfaraz Hussain Mirza's two volumes, *The Punjab Muslim Students Federation: an annotated documentary survey, 1937-1947* and *Muslim students and Pakistan Movement: selected documents, 1937-1947* (Mirza 1978, 1988). Along with these, there are also published collections of speeches of Muslim League representatives to "youth" and students (Mirza 2004).

Other engagements with student politics have been on the battle of ideologies on campus, between the leftist and right-wing student organisations, with a particular focus on the 1970s and 1980s. There are only a couple of articles and sub-chapters on the topic in academic research, for instance Vali Nasr's paper on the Islami-Jamiat-i-Tuleba or that by Humeira Iqtidar on the political altercations between the NSF and the Jamiat in the 1960s and 1970s (Nasr 1992; Iqtidar 2007, 2011; see also Nelson 2011). Azizuddin Ahmad, a progressive journalist, has written the only book which exclusively engages with student politics, albeit with a focus on leftist student groups, called *Pakistan mein Tulaba Tehreek*

(Ahmad 2000). It is joined by one sole edited volume on the topic that was put together by Islami Jamiat-e-Tulaba affiliates (Khalid 1989). One study of student politics in the Ayub Khan era presents a chronological narration of events and a naming of actors without going into any significant analysis. (Hussain 2010, 2011)

This focus on ideological battles is further represented in writings by veteran leaders of student organisations. These are written with a distinct ideological and commemorative motivation and straddle the categories of primary and secondary literature. Mukhtar Zaman's autobiographical-historical account of student activism during the Pakistan Movement mentioned above belongs to this genre (Zaman 1978). On leftist student politics after 1947, there are Jamaluddin Naqvi's *Leaving the left behind* (Naqvi 2014) which in one of the chapters gives an account of his time as a member of the Democratic Students' Federation or Laal Khan's *Pakistan's other story* (Khan 2008) that focuses from a Marxist standpoint mainly on trade union politics during the 1968-69 movement against Ayub Khan.

Tariq Ali's autobiography *Street fighting years* (Ali 1987) also falls within this category, in which he writes in the first chapter "Preludes" about his activism in his school and college years in Lahore interwoven with the larger developments in the domestic and global political scene. His earlier book *Pakistan: military rule or people's power* (Ali 1970) is a political analysis written at a time when Ayub Khan's regime had been toppled as a result of the popular movement of the late 1960s. These examples are part of a corpus of popular histories and autobiographical accounts of political events that touch on the authors' respective student years in some detail. This "genre" of writing on student politics can also be found in newspaper and blog articles, especially on the occasion when certain pivotal events in student history are commemorated on their anniversaries or a former "student leader" passes away (Naseem & Sarwar n.d)[13]

Overall, students and youth in South Asia have not been studied in their specific role in 'political mobilisation, urbanity, urban violence, national education and discipline [...]' (Roy 2013: 11), as Franziska Roy observes in her study of youth volunteer movements in late colonial India. The plethora of political, social and religious youth and student organisations were significant elements in the movements for self-

determination in the early twentieth century, as shown by Roy (ibid.) and others. Most studies analyse the political lives of youth and students through specific cases such as the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the Khilafat movement (Minault 1982), the Swadeshi movement, or Muslim nationalism (Joshi 1972; Jalal 1985; Gilmartin 1988). Such analyses often point to highly specific ideological and political developments in the individual trajectories of these movements and are limited in their reflection on youth and students as overarching categories, and how these emerge 'situated in a wider social and trans-territorial context,' or 'in terms of their potential interconnectedness and crossovers.'[14] (Roy 2013: 3) Roy's work contributes to understanding youth as a social and political category within the history of anti-colonial nationalism. Similarly, I am making the case in my thesis for fore-grounding the student as a category which is discursively, but also materially, produced both through colonialism as well as anti-colonial nationalisms, irrespective of ideological specificities (Bajwa 2019). In this line, there is much to be won from a perspective that emphasises the importance of the colonial experience for postcolonial trajectories that run *parallel to* each other on both sides of the India-Pakistan border. Much is to be gained in the future from a research perspective which brings colonial and postcolonial experiences of student activism in the global south into one frame (Potthast & Schembs 2019).

The importance of the colonial experience in shaping the nature of student politics in postcolonial countries is emphasised by Western academic sociological writings from the 1960s and 1970s that emerged from the experience of student activism of the late 1960s in the West. S. M. Lipset and Philipp Altbach undertake broad-stroked analyses of student politics in "underdeveloped" countries from a sociological-historical per-spective. They observe that the conclusions about the causes, nature and functioning of student politics that draw upon the Western cases of the late 1960s have little relevance in the developing countries of Asia, Africa and South America. They discuss how the cyclical "models" developed from the experience of the western industrialised countries cannot be applied to "Third world" contexts (Lipset & Altbach 1966; Altbach 1968, 1984). Writing from the 1960s to the 1980s, both Lipset and Albach call for closer sociological and historically contextualised studies of students in the former colonised world. They make broad arguments for the specificities of student politics in these countries, which are tied to their

class compositions, colonial institutional legacies, and histories of nationalist mobilisation.

Drawing on research in various Asian, African and South American contexts, Lipset makes the point that the small size of the educated middle class in many of these countries made the students important 'bearers of public opinion'. Their networks among the educated as well as their class and family ties with the elites gave them 'an audience which students in more developed countries can seldom attain.' (Lipset 1966: 133f.) Altbach makes a similar argument and adds that students had 'a consciousness of their unique role in society,' and saw themselves as 'an "incipient elite" destined for power and responsible for exercising their political power.' (Hanna & Hanna 1975 cit. in Altbach 1984: 638) This position, they argue, influenced their practice of politics and their high confidence of being immune to severe repression.

In a similar vein, Benedict Anderson points out how there may be certain traceable similarities both in the context of Europe as well as in the colonies, whereby '"young" and "youth" signified dynamism, progress, self-sacrificing idealism and revolutionary will' (Anderson 2006: 119). Marked differences, however, are more apparent. As B. C. Pal notes in *Memories of my life and times* (1973) in the colonies 'youth meant, above all, the *first* generation in any significant numbers to have acquired a European education, marking them off linguistically and culturally from their parents' generation, as well from the vast bulk of their colonised age mates.' (Pal 1973, cit. in Anderson 2006: 119) Lipset and Altbach as well as Anderson point to the historical transformation from a colonial to a postcolonial state which is central to understanding the unique place of students as citizens in their relationship with state and society.

The distinctiveness of students (and youth) as social actors has experienced a revival of interest in Pakistan since the parliamentary discussion was initiated by Prime Minister Gilani in 2008 about lifting the ban on student unions. The last decade has been a flurry of policy and NGO interest and newspaper articles on the topic of the political education of youth and students and the "depoliticisation" of campuses through the revival of student unions (PILDAT 2008; Rumi & Nauman 2013).[15] The events of the past two months have spurred the writings of op-eds and journalistic articles on the relationship between students, politics and democracy.[16] In the past years, one major producer of reports and

documentation related to questions of youth participation in civil society and policy analysis of the prospect of the restoration of student unions has been the non-governmental organisation BARGAD. It has undertaken historical surveys of student politics, brought our regular magazines dealing with the past, present and future of political education and activism of youth, held workshops on the topic and conducted countless interviews with former student leaders (Butt 2008, 2009). It is in fact such "policy literature" that comes closest to the questions that have been largely overlooked by studies of students and education. The interest of this genre of literature in the role of education in shaping a politically aware citizen lies in the present, but as my own research has shown (Bajwa 2019), the categories of citizen and student politics are historically produced and constitute the limits and possibilities of such policy efforts even today.

The overwhelming treatment of student politics in academic writing—as an extension of mainstream politics, as repositories of street power and as a mobilisational forces that were instrumentally employed by politics proper—obscures the place of students in Pakistan's history in a number of ways. First, it denies the autonomy and agency of students as historical actors with specific social locations, issues, political repertoires, and most importantly as having a distinct identity and place in society as "youth". Second, related to the question of agency is also the moments when this agency become visible in historiographical treatment. The relationship of the student and the state is not only about the moments of public upheaval and mobilisation. It is about the cumulative assertions of students as citizens in an everyday setting, dealing with issues related to their lives on and off campus through the means available to them, whether these were petitions, student unions, pamphleteering, lobbying. Third, it overlooks how students are not only social actors—subjects of political activism—but also a "population" that is the object of statist developmental projects of nation-building. They are thus simultaneously both a body that is crafted and acted upon but which also attempts to act with and vis-à-vis the state.

Conclusion

There is scope to expand our understanding of the significance of student politics in Pakistan's past and present. In viewing the literature on

national education and student politics within one frame, the history of students in Pakistan attains a new quality. It is not only a story of dramatic street protests but also a history of how "national education", class and citizenship were mutually produced in the "figure" of the student—a student, who is paradigmatically male gendered. The study of students cannot be separated from this long material and discursive history of national education. The perspective of political mobilisation dominant in historiography can be productively supplemented by a cultural and social history of students and the developmental nation-state. My own research has shown that the history of national education and the student-citizen is a manifestation of the historical making of class distinctions, gender regimes and the postcolonial (nation-)state (Bajwa 2019).

Further, the previous pages show how there is much scope for further research into the postcolonial legacies in Pakistan of the project of national education, as it emerged in the context of anti-colonial mobile-sation. The trajectory in postcolonial India has received solid academic attention but the historiographical treatment of students and education in Pakistan is largely bound by the 1947 caesura. The colonial history of Pakistan, and the place of students and Muslim nationalist educational endeavours in it, should be more than an obligatory "foregrounding" of post-1947 developments. The connections between the two phases separated by the momentous event of formal decolonisation emphasise the *postcolonial* nature of the state. In Pakistan the postcolonial "predicament" of continuities and breaks has been studied in considerable detail with respect to its political economy and the structural, economic and colonial continuities that shaped the ascendency of the military and bureaucracy as ruling institutions. However, the continuity in the modus operandi of the state across the temporal divide of 1947 was not only material but also discursive. The discourses of "development" and citizen-ship (or subjecthood) which influenced the policies of the independent state and shaped the demands and expectations of post-colonial citizens are rooted in the civilising mission of the colonial context.

The study of (higher) education in colonial India can allow us to see in how far paternalist discourses of legitimacy spilled over and across 1947 and informed the way that the Pakistani state consolidated itself. The legitimacy of British rule was broadly premised on the ideology of the colonial civilising mission. Education was a core element of this ideological

project, which was reproduced in the postcolonial project of "national education". As Sherman et al. argue, 'the rhetorical underpinnings of the post-colonial states were often not so novel' (Sherman et al. 2011). It is important to take into consideration the legacy of colonial institutions, practices and structures *as well as* the discourses of the nationalist movement(s) across the perceived temporal "break" of 1947.

Another aspect that emerges strongly from this review and my own research is the potential of inquiry from a perspective that is not bound by the outcome of the nation-state. Although Pakistan and India have a common colonial history, the logic of the nation-state framework has inevitably led to separate historiographies.[17] Studies tend to focus on movements that historiographically belong to the nationalist story of either Pakistan or India. Conversations across these boundaries are rare (Sherman et al. 2011). Few studies have examined the "family resemblances" between the nationalist experiments of education under colonialism across nationalist ideological boundaries (Roy 2013).[18] This is an avenue that needs to be explored further. It can give us insights into the structural imperatives that shaped both postcolonial states despite their seemingly divergent paths of democracy and authoritarianism, or of being "secular" and "confessional" states.

There is no dearth of historical examples on both side of the India-Pakistan border that underline the common legacies of nationalism and colonialism. I will end with two examples from early postcolonial Pakistan and India. On 8 January 1953, a demonstration was organised by the DSF dominated Inter-Collegiate Body and thousands of students took to the streets of Karachi, putting forward a charter of demands regarding the education system and infrastructure. The demonstration turned violent with seven students were killed in police firing. The news spread quickly, and processions were taken out by students across Pakistan, with solidarity protests taking place in the major cities of West and East Pakistan throughout the year 1953. On the evening of the firing, the Prime Minister Khwaja Nazimuddin addressed the students of Karachi through a Radio Pakistan broadcast.

> I am now addressing the youth of the country. Everyone of you is dear to me as my own children. I am affectionately devoted to you all and am addressing you tonight as a loving father. […] The unfortunate incidents of today which resulted in the death of some persons deeply grieved me. […] At this juncture, I feel it necessary

> to say that staging of demonstrations which result in breach of peace does not become a free nation. […] I am fully aware that your spirit of patriotism is second to none. Some selfish people are anxious to take advantage of your patriotic zeal. […] It is necessary for the Government to maintain law and order. I appeal to you to co-operate with the Government in maintaining law and order. (*Dawn*, January 12, 1953)

The paternal rhetoric expressed by the Prime Minister toward the youth of Pakistan is echoed by many a statement by state officials to "misbe-having" youth. It is not incidental that similar words were used by Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India when speaking to a group of College students in the city of Patna in Bihar on 30 August 1955, following student-police clashes, black flag demonstrations and the "desecration" of the National Flag around the time of independence day celebrations:[19]

> To take part in demonstrations and hooliganism in the name of politics is, apart from the right or wrong of it, not proper for students of any country. […] [I]t is obvious that any incident that warrants firing is bound to be deplorable [...but] I cannot tolerate this [hooliganism] at all. Is India a nation of immature, childish people [?] [...] We must behave like an adult, mature, independent nation. (Nehru 1955, cit. in Chakrabarty 2007: 332)[20]

Tracing the history of education and student politics back into colonial times can help us understand the coordinates of contention between state and students today. The Student Solidarity March of November 2019 must be seen in the longer history of student politics that stretches back not only to the 1960s but is embedded in the colonial period. Further, placing such inquiries into a larger South Asian history can contribute to overcoming the narrative of exceptionalism and crisis that has plagued engagements with Pakistan's postcolonial trajectory (Bajwa 2012). The parallels in India and Pakistan's early history of student activism as well as more recent example of the JNU student protests of 2016 and 2019 and the Student Solidarity March speak to the usefulness of such a perspective.

Endnotes

[1] This essay focuses on the context of West Pakistan, as the case of Bengali student activism and their central role in the establishment of Bangladesh would warrant a separate review. However, it must be considered that there is scope to view student politics in East Pakistan through lenses other than the history that led up to 1971.

[2] Of course, there is a difference between the student of the 1960s and the student of today and where they are located vis-à-vis the space of citizenship and civil society. Higher education, although still accessible to only a small section of society, is more widespread today than it was in the 1960s. Along with this, the factors of the new middle class, the youth bulge and urbanisation have changed the class nature of today's generation of higher education students. And finally, the Student Solidarity March was facilitated at this scale through the reach and scope of social media, which has become a tool of political and social mobilisation that has yet to be understood in its effects on the nature of the political.

[3] In my thesis, the question of how the ideal citizen is imagined frames my study of two historical cases of student activism, which I embed in an analysis of education as a national pedagogical project. I first look at the role of the All India Muslim Students' Federation, founded in 1937, in the political movement for "Pakistan", led by the All-India Muslim League. Second, I examine the student movement of 1953 in Karachi. Led by the leftist DSF to draw the government's attention to student demands related to the dismal condition of the education system and infrastructure after partition.

[4] The four interviewees on the 40-minute programme were Mohammad Amir, Nazim-e-Ala, IJT, Sher Khan, Nazim, Islamit-Jamiat-e-Tuleba (IJT) (University of Peshawar campus), Muzamil Khan, convener of the Student Action Committee, and Arooj Aurangzeb, member of the SAC and the Progressive Students Collective. 2019. Jirga with Saleem Safi. *Geo News*, 1 Dec., https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e6gkCR9eNFI [retrieved 02.12.19].

[5] A term used by Humeira Iqtidar in her study of student politics in the 1960s, in particular the Islami Jamiat-e-Tulaba.

[6] As this review essay is concerned with the history of higher education, it does not systematically include literature on aspects of mass education, social and religious reform, and the education for the poor.

[7] Unless otherwise qualified, I use progress as a generic term to describe 'a horizon of possibilities, a temporal blank screen upon which visions of reality can be projected by given actors. Progress can, potentially, be brought about through a set of transformative actions, which might either serve to alter or maintain the status quo.' (Bromber et al. 2015: 2) In the history of education, discourses of progress present themselves in many historically specific forms, from the civilising mission to Muslim modernism; from "moral and material progress" (Mann 2011) in the nineteenth century to modernisation theory in the mid-1950s.

[8] Inequality, difference, and the politics of education for all. *South Asia Chronicle*, 8, https://edoc.hu-berlin.de/handle/18452/20484 [retrieved 12.12.19].

[9] Along with the role of colonial educational politics in shaping a new anglicised elite that became the harbinger of "development", the class transformations were also shaped by economic factors. Ludden in 1992 called for a study of the colonial history of the postcolonial 'developmental regime', in particular, the connection between 'pervasive commercialisation' and the transformations of structures and relations of class, from the eighteenth century onwards (Ludden 1992).

[10] Several testimonies to the Indian Education Commission of 1882 (also known as the Hunter Commission) already criticised the governmental education policies' persistent higher education bias, including the testimony of anti-caste social reformer Jyotirao Phule. A reallocation of funds towards mass education, however, continued to face a strong opposition of nationalist activists (Tschurenev 2019; Rao 2010).

[11] The classical text that came to represent the modernisation theory was W. W. Rostow's *Stages of economic growth: a non-communist manifesto*, which was written in 1960 explicitly as a response to the Soviet challenge (Rostow 1997).

[12] I have put the term in quotation marks to highlight its discursive nature. The contestations over the definition of what "politics" is in respect to student activity highlights the tensions of post/colonial citizenship and subjecthood.

[13] 2009. Student politics pioneer Dr M Sarwar passes on. *Dawn*, 26 May, http://www.dawn.com/news/880129/student-politics-pioneer-dr-m-sarwar-passes-on [retrieved 04.08.17]; Tauseef Ahmed Khan. 2017. Obituary: a life lived by principle: Prof. Jamaluddin Naqvi. *Dawn*, 4 Aug., https://www.dawn.com/news/1349511/obituary-a-life-lived-by-principle. [retrieved 04.08.17].

[14] As Roy has argued, youth and volunteer movements were 'spaces where visions of the nation in vitro, ideals for a future citizenry and the contested issue of India's self-definition were discursively dreamt up and experimentally enacted.' (Roy 2013: 3) She considers the distinction between students and volunteers.

[15] B. Tanweer. 2007. There are very few committed individuals. *The News on Sunday*, 17 June, http://jang.com.pk/thenews/jun2007-weekly/nos-17-06-2007/spr.htm. [retrieved 02.04.13]; A. Bhatti. 2008. The state criminalised student politics. *The News*, 27 Apr., http://jang.com.pk/thenews/apr2008-weekly/nos-27-04-2008/dia.htm#4. [retrieved 02.03.14]; T. A. Khan. 2017. Obituary: a life lived by principle: Prof. Jamaluddin Naqvi. *Dawn*, 4 Aug., https://www.dawn.com/news/1349511/obituary-a-life-lived-by-principle. [retrieved 08.04.17]; A. Naqvi. 2016 "They should ban arms instead of student unions". *The News on Sunday*, 13 March, http://tns.thenews.com.pk/ban-arms-instead-student-unions/. [retrieved 07.12.17].

[16] A. Ali. 2019. Why did the Students march on the 29th? *Dawn*, 6 Dec., https://www.thefridaytimes.com/why-did-the-students-march-on-the-29th/?fbclid=IwAR2rMjOMY79BWJyh660nYQlXHcQKPNpXZMeJJzjV-3BChgXwZ5HGhlbSZnU. [retrieved 12.12.19]. A. Noor. 2019. Listening to the young. *Dawn*, 10 Dec., https://www.dawn.com/news/1521463?fbclid=IwAR3dP8V6tTetF8sO_u_vLPV3aYkHfwA0BuHLog6PVaP5NYpHuvKu1iG06l8. [retrieved 12.12.19].

[17] The same argument can be made for Pakistan and Bangladesh.

[18] Roy's study of volunteer bodies in colonial India is one of the few examples that makes such 'family resemblances' the focus of her study.

[19] These demonstrations were in protest of police firing on the students on 12 and 13 August, 1955 that had resulted from a conflict between the students of B.N. College in Patna and the State Transport Employees (Chakrabarty 2007).

[20] Jawaharlal Nehru, "Students and Indiscipline", Speech at public meeting in Patna, 30 August 1955 in selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, vol. 29, eds, H. Y. Sharada Prasad and A. K. Damodaran. Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund (2001), cit. in Chakrabarty 2007: 32.

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